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duties with propriety, and turning the current of public opinion and example in favour of virtue: as I am thoroughly persuaded that example, and the direction of public manners hence derived, are of far greater consequence than direct instruction.

On making inquiry I found, that owing to a competition among the employers, wages had risen greatly, and that a bad use was made of their superfluous earnings. It is a pity that they took this wrong direction. The instance mentioned in a late commercial report, of the work people employed at the cotton factory at Rothsay in the Isle of Bute, purchasing a library, and employing their leisure hours in reading, forms a pleasing contrast to the misapplication of time and money by the inhabitants of the Potteries. K.

VIRTUE, REASON AND LOVE, AN ALLEGORY.

REASON and Love were the daughters of Virtue; they were both amiable, but Love was more open and possessed less genius than her sister; she was always guided by her and never formed an attachment without her approbation. Her mother's old enemy, the Cyprian queen, had a son whose name also was Love, who often disguised himself under a feigned appearance, but to distinguish him from the daughter of Virtue, he was called Cupid. He inspired mortals with a flame, which not being approved by Reason, soon expired. The two sisters were one day walking, and entering a wood they beheld a sleeping infant: by its side sat Humanity weeping. "Alas," said she, "this beauteous babe was left here no doubt by some unnatural parent, do not let it perish." Love snatched the babe in her arms, saying—"henceforth this shall be my charge." The child grew under the care of Love and imbibed some of her virtues, but she could not withstand the attacks of Cupid who continually presented himself in the shape of her benefactress. In vain Reason expostulated, and Love suffered many painful moments to see her thus led astray. Virtue came one day to see her daughters, who begged she would use her in-

fluence to recall their protégée to her duty. She called to her and spoke as follows. "My dear child, I am displeased with your ingratitude, as well as surprised at your ignorance: my daughters found you a desolate child, they brought you from misery and took care of you, and yet you have not learned to distinguish between them and their worst enemy; Follow the advice of Reason, and you will be safe from his attacks. If you do not, you will feel the ill effects of your conduct; on the contrary if you overcome your weakness, you will have for your reward this crown of flowers; you will resemble in humility the violet which adorns it; and the primrose in modesty; the sweetness of your heart will spread the perfume of the jessamine and lily of the valley. Be spotless like them. The wreath of never fading roses is thornless. I will be glad to bestow it upon you. Know, dear child, when possessed of this crown you will have everlasting happiness and glory. Go endeavour to win it. I wish you success. "With that she embraced her. The heart of the young maid was touched with the words of Virtue, and she turned her thoughts to gain the crown endowed with such precious gifts. FLORELLA.

To the Editor of the Belfast Magazine.

OBSERVATIONS ON SOME REMARKS ON STERNE.

SIR,

I THINK that I am a friend to free discussion on all subjects, when conducted with candour and decency. Whether it were the want of these qualities in the communication by "A Reader," in your magazine of December last, in which he drags forth some very improbable anecdotes of Sterne, that made it excite in me so strong a feeling of disapprobation, I cannot positively assert. It is however certain that the paper I have just mentioned, signed "A Reader," his defence of it in February, and lately your "Lover of Simplicity of Character" in the magazine of last month, who has made common cause against poor Laurence—have each of them produced sensations in the per-

usual that meer difference of opinion could not. But the candour they seem to have violated with Sterne must not be withheld from his accusers. Suppose they are allowed the plea which they appear anxious to assume, that of advocating the cause of morality, does this require a recurrence to mean disgusting personalities, and the more ample propagation of avowed scandal—avowed even in the place where it was produced? Surely no: the advocate of a good cause disdains the alliance of baseness, he has nobler weapons to wield; if he cannot conquer with these he does not injure it by his management, nor endeavour to enlist the worst passions of mankind in his favour by nurturing their natural malignancy against superiority of character. But Sir, if we recur to the pretended facts stated in the anecdotes, they confute themselves, and can only injure Sterne's character with the indolent, or those already prejudiced and who are unwilling to have their prejudices removed. The story of his mother is totally undeserving of notice: your correspondent "A. B." in the Number for January, has well observed on its improbability, and in fact his enemies of whom no man had more, more prejudiced or more inveterate—even his enemies were ashamed of it long before his death, and it seems now brought forward with the uncandid intention of attaching obloquy more surely to his memory from the supposed impossibility of refutation.

The next *anecdote* is about his Daughter, related by a Mr. H— as told him by Dr. Marriot! There are few people in Belfast of thirty years standing who would look much farther than that name for solving this difficulty. Many of them have smarted under the lash of Dr. M—'s termagant muse, and did we not commonly look with unequal eyes on our own case and that of our neighbour, a very exaggerated statement would be immediately perceived, and the little that might really remain highly touched with the Doctor's usual colouring. Is it probable that Dr. Marriot and his family would allow a young lady in the state Miss

Sterne is described, and for the length of time which the delays suppose to remain lying on the floor? If so, the inhumanity imputed to Tristram remains with Miss Marriot and her Father.

The ridicule attempted to be introduced into the latter part of this story, strongly excited my indignation. It shows how easily little things, and innocent things, can be perverted, in order to load with contempt the object of our aversion.

The only charge brought "in a tangible shape" against the writings of Sterne by the "Reader" and "Lover of Simplicity" is obscenity, a heavy charge if well founded. All we have on this head however, is, that one of them tried to read the two first chapters of Tristram Shandy and could not get through them. Poor Gentleman! yet many worthy people with as much *real* delicacy as he *affects* to possess, have accomplished reading the two first and all the other chapters of this terrible book. Not that I mean to say that it is an unexceptionable production, or that there are not many passages in his books, or rather in this one and his Sentimental Journey, which would have been better omitted. His wit often led him to use expressions that excite the imagination of his readers in a way not favourable to the government of the passions. This, in a professed moralist would not be tolerated, but in a writer whose first aim was amusement, it is more pardonable, especially when he leads through flowery paths to the most excellent employment of a human being, the exercise of beneficence, charity and mercy.

The goodness of the end is the first, the means to attain it the second consideration. Sterne designed to exhibit the frivolity, the injustice, the ignorance, and the prejudices of mankind in such a form as they could not fail to condemn; thinking when this point was gained they must feel some reluctance at continuing the practice. He did not stop here, he studiously brought forwards the best principles of our nature, placed them in a new and beautiful light, decorated them with all the charms of eloquence and the easy playfulness of

wit. In doing this he might in the consciousness of innocence use a latitude of allusion not altogether acceptable to colder or more chastened imaginations and this I believe he frequently did without apprehending the consequences that might ensue from it in hearts not so pure as his own. This was imprudence, not vice; and this same imprudence was an original defect in his temperament, the effects of which, to his cost, he felt all his days: "For had mitres rained down from heaven as thick as hail, his head was so disfigured with the ugly blows which his adversaries had given him in the dark, not one of them could fit it." Alas, poor Yorick! thine adversaries need not now sculk into corners when they aim their blows at thee; they are secure from chastisement; the ass may now trample on the fallen lion.

The authority of Samuel Richardson, a good man I believe, and a writer of considerable celebrity, is introduced as a *coupe de main*, as a finishing blow, to overwhelm this poor victim of prejudice, and his advocates, with dismay and confusion. Our author says somewhere, that, "let a man be but true to himself, and one man is as good as another all the world over;" this I felt to be true on first reading the passage, I suppose thirty years ago, and I never had reason to entertain a doubt of it since. I say then Sir, that I feel no respect for authority, but the authority of superior virtue. Where morality, religion, or government are the subjects, as I must stand or fall by my own opinion, I yield not my judgment to Pope or Prince, or any human authority however great, respectable, or learned. Truth is simple, and the way to it short, and the untutored mind that loves it sincerely need never fear embracing a counterfeit in its stead. The meanest and most unlearned appreciate the value of right conduct, and have as quick a perception of justice, as those in a more dignified rank and having all the advantages of education. They can feel with equal certainty what effect any book they read produces upon their temper and disposition; if it makes them laugh or cry, love or hate virtue

or vice more than before, whether they feel a greater desire to do good and a greater reluctance to commit bad actions than formerly. Surely in this case there is no need to consult Samuel Richardson, nor appeal to the sickly delicacy of the fastidious young lady his daughter's correspondent. The readers of Sterne can appeal to a surer guide, and will therefore take the liberty of judging for themselves, and for the cause of morality and decency as involved in his and their conduct. A critic oversteps his duty when he condescends to scrutinize the person and private conduct of an author, more especially if he draws his information from doubtful and impure sources. When he notices the tendency of a work, observes upon the composition, style, and manner of execution, he has warned the public: and according to the report, and the confidence they put in the ability and integrity of the reporter, will they be inclined to encourage or reprobate the production, but ultimately individuals must judge for themselves. Whether your two correspondents have observed the rules of justice and christian candour in the remarks they have thought proper to make on an author long admired, and long since incapable of speaking for himself, I leave to the private judgment of their own hearts, the public will not fail to decide that part of the cause which comes within its sphere. I must observe however, that were authority to decide, Sterne's advocates would be found more numerous than those who deny him, and equally respectable for talent and integrity.

One of these gentlemen, I forget which now, seems to have a great veneration for *English* ladies, and with an un-Irish gallantry withholds homage from his country women. I certainly yield not to him in respect and attachment to the sex, and I can hail with equal honour those who have stood forth the champions of reason and virtue; yet I avow a predilection for my country-women who I know are equal—nay more than equal in every perfection, in every estimable natural and acquired accomplishment to those of any country upon earth. I have not read any of

the two productions of Miss Owenson he mentions, which I intend doing as soon as I have leisure, but I have her other works, and have in general thought highly of them, and must request permission to consider it as great an honour to have that fair writer my country woman, as if her name was enrolled in the pompous list above alluded to. Her latter writings must indeed have fallen extremely short of her former, if they do not add to her fame, with them make her an ornament to her sex and country, and merit for her the honourable appellation of "a truly patriotic Irish-woman."

I have now, Sir, given you some trouble, which you'll be pleased to put to the account of your "Lover of Simplicity of character," for although I felt a kind of horror at the "anecdotes" and the rejoinder, yet but for his pertinacity I should never have been able to conquer my natural reluctance to appear in your pages.—I will therefore take my leave of you and your readers without any apology, and intend henceforth to leave Sterne to his own merits and the candid construction of his readers; perfectly agreeing with what was happily expressed, I think by himself, that, his books may be contemplated with the same innocence and purity of thought as a beautiful infant sprawling naked on the floor. T.

Belfast, May 18th, 1809.

To the Editor of the Belfast Magazine.

SKETCH OF A RAMBLE TO ANTRIM,
TAKEN JULY 10TH, 1808.

I LEFT Carrickfergus just as the sun began to make his appearance in the Eastern horizon, and took the road leading to Antrim, by the way of Ballyclare. The morning was one of the finest I had ever seen; not a leaf shook with the wind; even the morning zephyr slumbered, and nought disturbed the silence, save the bay of the watch-dogs, in the print-fields by which I passed. During the night there had been a copious fall of dew, which being now struck by the oblique rays of the rising sun, glittered on each leaf like innumerable pearls; my soul felt the harmony of the scene; for, to use the words of the poet:

“ “ all things smiled
“ With fragrance, and with joy my heart
“ o’erflow’d.”

I wanted, however, the morn song of the birds to enliven this charming scene, for nought was heard of their late carols, but here and there a chirping of the mother and her young among the hedges.

“ The groves, the fields, the meadows,
“ now no more

“ With melody resound; ’tis silence all.

“ As if the lovely songsters, overwhelm’d

“ By bounteous nature’s plenty, lay in—

“ tranced

“ In drowsy lethargy.”

I soon ascended the hill called Bryan-tang, and looking back, had a fine view of the town and castle, the Copeland isles, the opposite shore of Down, the entrance of the bay, and several vessels becalmed in the offing. I stood a few minutes contemplating the prospect before me, when the notes of a thrush in the adjacent glen roused my attention, and seemed to hail the rays of the rising sun with the utmost raptures. I listened a little to its charming melody, then quickly pursued my journey, and leaving the main road, ascended the hill called Slieve true, on the top of which is a large cairn of stones, supposed to be an ancient funeral pile of the dead. I ascended the cairn to enjoy the charming prospect which it affords; it is truly grand, especially the view of the valley extending from Loaghneagh to Larne, a space of about sixteen miles in length, and, at a mean, about seven in breadth; the country had a very pleasant appearance, being generally in a high state of cultivation, interspersed with numerous villages, villas and bleach-greens; the sight recalled to my memory these lines of the poet,

“ O vale of bliss! O softly-swelling hills,
“ On which the power of cultivation lies,
“ And joys to see the wonders of his toil.”

A part of the town of Belfast is seen from hence; also the mountains of Mourne, and some high hills in the counties of Tyrone and Derry; the morning being pretty clear, I saw likewise some of the mountains of Scotland, and the Isle of Man. About twelve years ago, James Craig, esq. M. P. proprietor of the soil, built an elegant school-house here, but from its stormy situation in winter, and the